

Design and Access Statement
On behalf of Burgess Hill Cricket Club

Redevelopment of the St Johns Park Pavilion



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1. Introduction and Background

This Planning, Design & Access Statement is in support of a full planning application for the redevelopment of the existing St John's Park Pavilion in St John's Park, Burgess Hill. The application is submitted on behalf of Burgess Hill Cricket Club.

A pre planning application submission was made in September 2021 to Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) and following the planners' recommendations the plans were updated in line with comments received from the positive pre-app enquiry.

In the recent past there has been an extension to the northern side of the pavilion providing an additional storage facility and in the past 12 months the changing rooms within the Pavilion building have been refurbished.

The extended building will be on the exact same footprint as the existing premises. The roofline closely follows the existing. It will utilise the existing double storey side extensions to provide a two-storey building throughout. Carefully considered discussions between all parties aided by the experience offered by the lead architectural consultants has led to a more refined design being developed that satisfies the requirements of the cricket club, enables the local community to make use of the premises and to provide a building that can provide a substantial income stream for the Council, thereby reversing the losses that are currently being incurred. This has allowed a more cohesive and integrated design to be developed. The new building will consequently provide a range of very flexible community facilities, including a community hall, social area and additional sports changing rooms for women and girls and associated amenity facilities as well as specialist spaces. This report sets out the relevant background to the proposal, reviews planning policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework and assesses the scheme in accordance with the requirements of the Development Plan and other material considerations. This statement has been prepared having regard to the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment) Order 2013 (SI2013 No 1238), DCLG 01/2006 and the DCLG Guidance on the Information Requirements of Validation, March 2010. This application should be read in conjunction with the following plans and supporting statements:

CC-21-001 – Location and Block Plans

CC-21-002 – Existing Plan and Elevations

CC-21-003 – Proposed Plan

CC-21-004 – Proposed Elevations

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2. Site and Surroundings

Burgess Hill is a rapidly expanding town with plans for further substantial housing and population growth over the coming decade with in particular the Northern Arc development. There is a significant lack of community facilities in the town available and suitable to be hired out. The application site is located in St John's Park, a conservation area, managed by MSDC on behalf of the Charity Commissioners.

To the north of the application site is Park Rd and on the far side of this road some 100m away, a series of detached, two storey houses. The remainder of the pavilion building is surrounded by parkland which is accessible by the general public at all times.

The current facilities comprise a single storey pavilion, with double storey wings, constructed of brick under a shallow pitched tiled roof, with a broadly north-south ridgeline. The building contains a small main hall, bar, kitchen and toilets with changing rooms, various store areas and external public toilets and a private café facility open to the public in the summer months. At first floor level which is accessible via two separate loft ladders, the loft areas are empty aside from water tanks and power cables. There are areas of hardstanding and soft play area to the eastern side of the main building. To the west of the building are footpaths and tennis courts and to the north of the building is the cricket club's practice net facility laid to hard surface.

3. Site History

There is little planning history relating to this site since the original wooden pavilion was burned down and replaced over 30 years ago. The Cricket Club obtained planning permission to replace the dilapidated practice nets in 2015 and more recently the Council increased the storage areas and refurbished the changing rooms.

4. Planning Policy

Section 38(6) states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. These considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework. The key Development Plan document in relation to this application, for the purposes of the Act, comprises the saved policies of the Mid Sussex District Local Plan (MSDLP) 2004.

5. National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF was published on 27 March 2012 and sets out that the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, made up of the three dimensions of economic, social and environmental, which are mutually dependent (paragraph 6-8).

Paragraph 14 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and notes that this involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including improving the conditions in which people are able to undertake leisure.

Paragraph 17 sets out 12 core land-use planning principles that should underpin decision making. These include that planning should not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives; always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity; encourage the effective use of land by using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value; and take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs. Paragraph 34 notes that plans and decisions should ensure developments that generate significant movement are located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes can be maximised.

Chapter 7 sets out the requirement for good design and notes the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. It notes good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. It notes that planning policies and decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is noted, however, that it is appropriate to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

Chapter 8 relates to promoting healthy communities. It notes that the planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. It notes that in order to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments; guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services; and ensure that established facilities are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community. It also notes that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. It notes that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

☐ An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or

☐ The development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

6. Mid Sussex District Local Plan

The Mid Sussex District Local Plan (MSDLP) was adopted in May 2004. The following policies have been saved and are relevant to the determination of this application.

Policy B1 seeks a high standard of design in all new development. Development must respect the character of the locality, taking into account considerations such as scale, massing, siting, density, views, height and orientation of new buildings in relation to those that exist; use appropriate materials; show that adequate consideration has been given to spaces between and around buildings and effective use made of existing landscape features; and provide suitable new planting where necessary.

Policy B3 requires new development to not significantly harm the amenities of nearby residents by virtue of noise and disturbance, loss of privacy, overlooking, reduction in sunlight and daylight, and reduction in outlook.

Policy B5 requires all new development to which the public will have access to include a suitable means of access into and between the buildings for disabled people.

Policy B6 notes that proposals which would result in the loss of areas of public or private open space of particular importance to the locality, by virtue of their recreational value, will not be permitted. Where such open space is lost, appropriate provision may be sought elsewhere.

Policy B7 seeks to resist the loss of trees which are a significant public amenity value.

Policy T4 relates to traffic generation and requires new development, amongst other things, to not cause an unacceptable impact on the local environment in terms of road safety and increased traffic; be located close to public transport routes; seek to minimise the increase in private trips generated by the development; provide convenient and safe pedestrian access to and within the development; and conform with the District Council's adopted vehicle and cycle parking standards, including the provision of parking spaces for people with disabilities.

Chapter 9 relates to recreation, and includes a wide range of leisure activities, including playing formal sports. Paragraph 9.14 notes that the Council will take a positive approach towards new development proposals related to sport and recreation and proposals which enhance the range and quality of sport and recreational facilities within the district will normally be favourably considered, subject to other policies in the Plan.

Policy R1 supports the provision of new sporting and recreational development within built up areas, subject to an appropriate impact on visual and residential amenity and providing:

- (a) They are suitably located in relation to their intended catchment area;
- (b) They are accessible by choice means of transport;
- (c) They are of a design and scale appropriate for the purpose intended; and
- (d) Other policies and objectives of the plan are satisfied.

The policy also notes that proposals should be flexible in their design so that different need groups and activities can be accommodated.

Policy R2 notes that proposals which would result in the loss of existing formal or informal open space with recreational or amenity value, will only be permitted where the applicant can demonstrate that a replacement site has been identified and will be developed to provide facilities of an equivalent or an improved standard.

Policy R7 states that development that would result in a reduction of existing recreational facilities in the countryside will not be permitted.

- (a) A need can be demonstrated for the activity to be located in the area;
- (b) The development makes full use of any existing buildings that are available and appropriate for the purpose;

Chapter 10 relates to community facilities, and notes that the Council is committed to retaining and encouraging the improvement of existing community facilities. Paragraph 10.24 notes that it is important for new buildings to be flexible in design, in order to accommodate a variety of needs and all should provide access and facilities for disabled users. It notes that new community facilities should normally be located within the built-up area, although, within smaller settlements and villages, there may be exceptional circumstances where facilities essential to the needs of local communities cannot be accommodated within the built-up area.

Such proposals will be sensitively considered in relation to other appropriate policies, regarding development in the countryside. In support of this, Policy CS6 states that proposals for the redevelopment of community facilities will only be permitted where the community use is relocating or improved facilities are to be provided in their locality.

Policy CS8 supports the development or improvement of community facilities within the built-up area where:

- (a) There is no unacceptable impact on the residential amenity of nearby properties;
- (b) Any new building or extension is in character with the surrounding area;
- (c) The location is easily accessible by foot, bicycle and public transport; and
- (d) Adequate parking, including provision for the disabled, is provided.

7. Considerations

The following issues are considered key to the determination of this application and are each considered in turn:

Use
Loss of Open Space
Design
Access & Parking
Amenity
Landscaping

8. Use

The application site currently comprises the existing pavilion building and land that is part of the existing St Johns Park conservation area. These together with the wider park area, comprise the cricket pitch and outfield, an equipped children's play space and skateboard park and provide an important range of community facilities and a focal point for the residents of Burgess Hill and the surrounding area.

Notwithstanding their value to the community, the existing building is now ageing and is no longer considered fit for purpose and is in a deteriorating condition. It does not provide adequate, modern and flexible facilities to meet the community's or the cricket club's needs. The social area is poorly laid out in terms of utilisable space and the kitchen and toilet facilities inadequately support both the club and any external social functions.

Furthermore, the despite the recent upgrade of the changing rooms, the pavilion facilities fail to adequately provide modern standards for sports facilities, in terms of space, for women and girls changing rooms and WC's, etc. The facilities also fail to meet the requirements needed to accommodate play groups and other community group users. This results in the building being vacant for most of the year outside the cricket season and heavily dependent upon cricket club members for any hire income outside of the season.

All tiers of planning policy support the provision and improvement of recreation and community facilities, acknowledging the positive impact such facilities can have on the health, social well-being and sustainability of communities. Within the MSDLP, policies R1 and CS8 support the provision of recreation and community facilities within built-up areas, in principle.

The need for the facilities is detailed above. We have sought to provide the replacement facilities on the same site as the existing pavilion. We understand that during the construction phase it will be possible for the pavilion changing rooms to continue to be used and as mentioned above the building remains vacant for the majority of the 7 months that comprises the off season so little further disruption will occur during the construction phases.

9. Loss of Open Space

The proposed extension will result in the pavilion remaining on its current footprint within St John's Park. Any incursion into the ground at the front will be minor involving the installation of a soft play area for the potential use of a future play group tenant. There is therefore no loss of any grassed area, which would have a material impact on the usability of the wider recreation ground, including as a cricket pitch.

The NPPF seeks to resist the loss of recreational facilities. In this instance there is a net gain in facilities due to the enhanced women and girls changing rooms etc which are an integral part of the overall scheme. On this basis, the proposal is in accordance with paragraph 74 of the NPPF, which permits the loss of existing open space, if the development is for alternative sport and recreational provision, the need for which clearly outweighs the loss.

Policy R2 of the MSDLP seeks to resist the loss of open space with recreational or amenity value. However, as detailed above, it is submitted that this scheme does not result in any material loss of open space. Whilst there could be a minor reduction in the amount of grassed area etc, the overall quality of the recreational facilities at the site will improve. There will be an improvement in changing facilities in association with formal sports uses and the redevelopment is at the fringes of the recreation ground and its siting will have no material impact on the use of the area for formal sports (i.e. cricket) or other informal open space use.

Overall, therefore, the minor reduction in open space is outweighed by both the qualitative improvement in built facilities associated with the open space. The scheme is considered to be in accordance with paragraph 74 of the NPPF and Policy R2 of the MSDLP.

10. Design

Our research and consultation process made it apparent that historically the facility requirements such as kitchens, toilets in the design had led to a complicated and inefficient layout. Whilst elements of duplication were necessary it was agreed that the allocation of space in this application would be decided on the basis of most efficient support of a community programme and sporting requirements.

In order to achieve this, a subdivision of the building both vertically and horizontally was adopted. This better satisfies the full range of usage for both the Community area and the Cricket Club. By carefully refining the design, by incorporating shared usage and more flexible governance, space has been much better used to provide a very much enhanced community space. The building is also much more efficient to manage.

However, the key benefit to the revised scheme is utilisation of the existing roof void plus the new roof over the extended footprint. This enables the footprint required to house all of the previously required activity on a single storey site is retained whilst the expanded Community use availability is incorporated over the two floors. Furthermore, the scheme meets all of the requirements of the mobility impaired in accordance with Policy B5.

Crucial to the proposal, the ridge height of the existing building has been maintained at a similar height to existing in the new proposal by constructing and redesigning the roof to accommodate the upper floor within it. A series of dormers to the playing side of the building allow access to the balcony. This sophisticated roof construction allows the full extent of the roof void to be accessed which is the key to the successful gaining of usable space.

The net impact of the design modification is therefore to generate a building that is operationally superior, provides more usable community space, allows independent management and delivery by the Council or possibly even the Cricket Club without unnecessary duplication. To support the interaction between external events and the Cricket Club, two sets of double sliding folding screens are mounted on the upper elevation.

The plans do not envisage any changes to the newly redeveloped team and officials changing rooms. All changing spaces are designed to be in conformance with the Governing Bodies of Sport (ECB) technical specifications. The existing cricket nets rebuilt in 2015 will remain in their current location.

The main entrance incorporating the lift and staircase to the first floor is located centrally. The upper floor houses the main sports clubroom with a small balcony which provides enhanced views over the playing area together with a bar. The kitchen facilities have been enlarged to ensure they will support external hirings and are of a size that is more suitable for the preparation of cricket teas.

Toilets are located on both levels and can be used by any party dependent on need. Plant rooms and general storage is designed to be accessed by both the cricket club and other external organisations hiring the facility, again saving space. The building will utilise the same materials as the existing pavilion to ensure it blends in seamlessly with the current environment.

It is also anticipated that reclaimed water storage systems will be incorporated into the design which will have the capacity to provide water to the cricket square.

11. Access and Parking

The existing pavilion is predominantly served by the existing, adjacent car park and parking bays. In addition, there is space for some on road parking surrounding St John's Park.

The application does not envisage the need for any additional parking facilities because it is not anticipated that there will be an increase in sporting use. The parking requirements arising from an increase in hire of the facilities can be accommodated within the current parking arrangements.

The redeveloped pavilion is to serve the needs of the local community. It seeks to provide utilisable floorspace for the existing, long-standing users whilst at the same time making the building more attractive to new hirers. It is not considered that the new building in itself will lead to a material or significant increase in traffic movements to and from the site.

On this basis, it is submitted that the scheme is in accordance with paragraphs 32 and 34 of the NPPF and Policy T4 of the MSDLP.

12. Amenity

It is submitted that none of the occupiers of residential properties to the north will experience any loss of amenity as a result of the proposed scheme.

The proposed scheme will have no undue impact on local residential amenity and the scheme is therefore in accordance with Policy B3 of the MSDLP.

13. Landscaping

The boundaries of the site are unaffected by the proposed scheme. All existing soft landscaping is to be retained. No works are proposed within the canopy of the trees surrounding the pavilion as these were reduced recently by MSDC. There will therefore be no arboriculture impact from this building.

Overall, the scheme has no significant impact on the existing trees around the site. Whilst the visual impact from the building will change, there are no wider landscape views that will be unduly affected. On this basis, it is submitted that the scheme is in accordance with B1 and B7 of the MSDLP.

14. Statement of Community Involvement

This proposed scheme has been prepared in light of consultation with both local residents and key organisations.

Over recent years regular meetings have also taken place with representatives of the Mid Sussex District Council leisure department and legal department to discuss the inadequacies of the current building and its facilities and what can be done to remedy the deficiencies. A pre-application meeting has also taken place with the Planning Department. These have also influenced the design evolution. The design meets the technical specifications of the ECB.

The latest evolution of the designs has been on display in the pavilion and have been made available for viewing at several events and shared with potential users.

This therefore ensures that the views of all of these groups are at the heart of the decision making process. This in turn ensures that the wider membership of these groups is fully integrated into the consultation exercise on a constant and ongoing basis. The scheme now presented under this application therefore reflects the overwhelming majority of opinion of key members of the interested parties and local community. Views from all groups have been fully considered and reflected in the decisions made in determining the design of the building, comprising this application.

15. Summary

The application envisages the partial redevelopment and refurbishment of the existing St John's Park pavilion. The existing structure and design are of considerable age and no longer fit for purpose. The new premises will provide a much enhanced community and leisure facility to serve the local community's needs. This includes improved changing facilities for women, dedicated areas for community activities and expanded facilities for the fast growing town cricket club, thereby assisting its sustainability and continuity of its community engagement. It is proposed to site the extension within the same foot print of the existing premises and so there will be no building encroachment onto St John's Park. The layout also provides much improved connectivity with the adjacent recreational areas for the benefit of users, players and visitors.

All tiers of planning policy emphasise the importance of supporting the provision and enhancement of community facilities for the well-being of the local area. They encourage LPA's to respond positively to enable schemes to meet the needs of the local community. At a local level this is reflected in MSDLP through policy C1.

Furthermore, the building will have no impact on the usability of the recreational areas, including for formal sports use as a cricket pitch. The building is of bespoke design, using high quality materials. Its impact has been minimised through features which soften and break up its mass, and the use of the existing roof pitch and associated ridge line. Its siting has no impact on residential or visual amenity.

The proposed building is unlikely to have any material impact on traffic generation as any cricket activity is restricted due to there being only one cricket pitch. Whilst it is anticipated that hirings will increase these activities will be during the day and evenings and not at the busier weekends.

The scheme complies with relevant Development Plan policies, in particular C1(e), B1, B3, B5, B6, B7, T4, and Chapters 9 and 10 of the MSDLP, and is also supported by the NPPF, and in particular paragraphs 14, 17, 28, 32, 34, 56, 60 and Chapter 8. It is submitted that there are no other material considerations which weigh against the scheme, and planning permission should therefore be granted.

